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BRADLEY P. SYLVESTER
NEY, ADAMS, ET AL
200 N. BROADWAY-STE. 300
WICHITA KS 67202

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AUG 11 2004

OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of

Miller

Application No. 10/020,739

Filing Date: 18 December, 2001

Attorney Docket No. (None)

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DECISION ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition filed on 30 June, 2004, alleging, *inter alia*, unavoidable delay under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a).

For the reasons set forth below, the petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) is **GRANTED**.

BACKGROUND

The record reflects that:

- Petitioner failed to reply timely and properly to the Notice of Non-Compliant Amendment mailed on 5 September, 2003, with reply due absent extension of time on or before Monday, 6 October, 2003;
- the application went abandoned by operation of law after midnight 6 October, 2003;
- no Notice of Abandonment was mailed before the instant petition was filed;
- in addition to his statement of events, Petitioner submitted a copy of a reply alleged to have been submitted on and over a 5 October, 2004, certificate of mailing, however, it appears that the reply was not received by the Office.

STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Congress has authorized the Commissioner to "revive an application if the delay is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable." 35 U.S.C. §133 (1994).¹

The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) and (b) set forth the requirements for a petitioner to revive a previously unavoidably or unintentionally, respectively, abandoned application under this congressional grant of authority. The language of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) is clear, unambiguous, and without qualification: the delay in tendering the reply to the outstanding Office action, as well as filing the first petition seeking revival, must have been unavoidable for the reply now to be accepted on petition.²

Delays in responding properly raise the question whether delays are unavoidable.³ Where there is a question whether the delay was unavoidable, Petitioners must meet the burden of establishing that the delay was unavoidable within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a).⁴ And the Petitioner must be diligent in attending to the matter.⁵ Failure to do so does not constitute the care required under Pratt, and so cannot satisfy the test for diligence and due care.

By contrast, unintentional delays are those that do not satisfy the very strict statutory and regulatory requirements of unavoidable delay, and also, by definition, are not intentional.⁶ And petitions calling upon the authority of the Commissioner to act, such as that under 37 C.F.R. §1.181,⁷ require diligence as to their filing—i.e., the petition must be filed within two months of

¹ 35 U.S.C. §133 provides:

35 U.S.C. §133 Time for prosecuting application.

Upon failure of the applicant to prosecute the application within six months after any action therein, of which notice has been given or mailed to the applicant, or within such shorter time, not less than thirty days, as fixed by the Commissioner in such action, the application shall be regarded as abandoned by the parties thereto, unless it be shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that such delay was unavoidable.

² Therefore, by example, an unavoidable delay in the payment of the Filing Fee might occur if a reply is shipped by the US Postal Service, but due to catastrophic accident, the delivery is not made.

³ See: Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53158-59 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 86-87 (October 21, 1997).

⁴ See: In re Application of G, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989).

⁵ See: Diligence in Filing Petitions to Revive and Petitions to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment, 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 33 (March 19, 1991). It was and is Petitioner's burden to exercise diligence in seeking either to have the holding of abandonment withdrawn or the application revived. See 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office supra.

⁶ Therefore, by example, an unintentional delay in the reply might occur if the reply and transmittal form are to be prepared for shipment by the US Postal Service, but other pressing matters distract one's attention and the mail is not timely deposited for shipment.

⁷ The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.181 provide:

§ 1.181 Petition to the Commissioner.

(a) Petition may be taken to the Commissioner:

(1) From any action or requirement of any examiner in the *ex parte* prosecution of an application, or in the *ex parte* or *inter partes* prosecution of a reexamination proceeding which is not subject to appeal to the Board of Patent Appeals and Interferences or to the court;

the action complained of.

Allegations as to Unavoidable Delay
and Unintentional Delay

Petitioner has evidenced that he was diligent in his reply to the Office action in question, and, though the reply was not received it was timely submitted. Petitioner has made a showing of unavoidable delay.

Thus, Petitioner has satisfied his burden under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a).

CONCLUSION

Therefore, the petition as considered under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) hereby is **granted**.

The instant file is forwarded to Technology Center 3700 for further processing in due course.

Telephone inquiries concerning this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (703) 305-9199.



John J. Gillon, Jr.
Senior Attorney
Office of Petitions

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- (2) In cases in which a statute or the rules specify that the matter is to be determined directly by or reviewed by the Commissioner; and
- (3) To invoke the supervisory authority of the Commissioner in appropriate circumstances. For petitions in interferences, see § 1.644.
- (b) Any such petition must contain a statement of the facts involved and the point or points to be reviewed and the action requested. Briefs or memoranda, if any, in support thereof should accompany or be embodied in the petition; and where facts are to be proven, the proof in the form of affidavits or declarations (and exhibits, if any) must accompany the petition.
- (c) When a petition is taken from an action or requirement of an examiner in the *ex parte* prosecution of an application, or in the *ex parte* or *inter partes* prosecution of a reexamination proceeding, it may be required that there have been a proper request for reconsideration (§ 1.111) and a repeated action by the examiner. The examiner may be directed by the Commissioner to furnish a written statement, within a specified time, setting forth the reasons for his or her decision upon the matters averred in the petition, supplying a copy to the petitioner.
- (d) Where a fee is required for a petition to the Commissioner the appropriate section of this part will so indicate. If any required fee does not accompany the petition, the petition will be dismissed.
- (e) Oral hearing will not be granted except when considered necessary by the Commissioner.
- (f) The mere filing of a petition will not stay any period for reply that may be running against the application, nor act as a stay of other proceedings. Any petition under this part not filed within two months of the mailing date of the action or notice from which relief is requested may be dismissed as untimely, except as otherwise provided. This two-month period is not extendable.
- (g) The Commissioner may delegate to appropriate Patent and Trademark Office officials the determination of petitions.
- [24 Fed. Reg. 10332, Dec. 22, 1959; 34 Fed. Reg. 18857, Nov. 26, 1969; paras. (d) and (g), 47 Fed. Reg. 41278, Sept. 17, 1982, effective Oct. 1, 1982; para. (a), 49 Fed. Reg. 48416, Dec. 12, 1984, effective Feb. 11, 1985; para. (f) revised, 65 Fed. Reg. 54604, Sept. 8, 2000, effective Nov. 7, 2000; paras. (a) and (c) revised, 65 Fed. Reg. 76756, Dec. 7, 2000, effective Feb. 5, 2001]